UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1997/P/L.13
27 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
Second regular session 1997
18-19 March 1997
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEWS AND MAJOR EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Americas and the Caribbean

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1995 and 1996.

INTRODUCTION

1. Four mid-term reviews (MTRs) were held in the Americas and Caribbean region in 1996, for countries with widely differing situations: the multi-island programme for the Eastern Caribbean; and Colombia, Ecuador and Haiti. In addition, three major evaluations were undertaken: of the Central America water and sanitation programme, which covers seven countries; of programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru; and of the Haiti country programme. An evaluation of efforts to control iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in Bolivia is also discussed.

* E/ICEF/1997/8.

2. The context for the reviews and evaluations was set by the Third Ministerial Conference on Social Policy and Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago de Chile in August 1996. Progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children was reviewed and new challenges for the region were set. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for programming and reviewing UNICEF activities in the region. The framework has been applied systematically to strategy development, as recorded in country notes, and was used for MTRs for the first time in 1996.

3. All the reviews were conducted with broad participation of the relevant Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other partners and United Nations and donor representatives. A second, internal exercise was to review the implications for country programme management plans in UNICEF offices, with adjustments made to the organization and staffing of offices as appropriate.

MID-TERM REVIEWS

Colombia

4. The MTR in Colombia confirmed the role of UNICEF as a catalyst for change which is capable of bringing together the various groups that work for children. The participants recognized that the main contribution of UNICEF was not financial but rather its capacity to support institutions in developing strategies, methodologies and innovative experiences as well as in focusing on the operative aspects of promoting children's rights.

5. The integrated basic services programme was singled out as having the potential to become a social development model. The MTR recommended strengthening local capacity for management of social policy at municipal level.

6. Rights, peace, gender and environment were repeatedly referred to as cross-cutting elements of cooperation that required a new integrated and non-sectoral approach to programming.

7. In conclusion, the MTR requested UNICEF to expand its efforts for peace by further encouraging and promoting the direct participation of children in events and programmes designed to make their fears and hopes known. UNICEF was asked to continue and expand its catalytic role in the broad alliance of government, NGOs and civil society partners; to ensure that municipal plans in favour of children are developed; to expand its training and capacity-building with counterparts; and to develop approaches for developing community capacity for planning and problem-solving to improve the situation of children and women.

8. A further recommendation of the MTR was to extend the existing country programme for another year to compensate for implementation constraints encountered in the first years of the country programme.

Eastern Caribbean multi-island programme

9. The MTR of the Eastern Caribbean multi-island programme showed that the success in meeting the basic needs of the majority of children and women was the result of decades of sustained investment in social development. However, some countries which used to enjoy high living standards based on foreign exchange earnings have seen increases in the numbers of people living in poverty. The examples of Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago show how quickly the situation of children and women can deteriorate following a few years of economic and political instability.

10. The consolidation of social gains was not considered complete. Emerging problems such as drug abuse among adolescents, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, crime and violence were seen as linked to poor educational performance and undetected functional illiteracy, particularly, but not exclusively, among boys.

11. The review highlighted growing disparities between richer and poorer sections of society. UNICEF was requested to help Governments and NGOs to better target their interventions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was found to be a useful tool for elevating social development to the same level of importance as economic development and for providing a framework to evaluate community-based arrangements for child development. Participants in the review also requested an evaluation of the impact of programmes in the areas of parenting and early childhood education.

12. In conclusion, it was confirmed that the strategies of the ongoing multi-island programme were well suited to achieving its objectives. Nevertheless, emerging problems require attention, underserved populations have to be better targeted and the partnership with NGOs, which is currently very productive, needs to be expanded. Investments in social development have to be maintained, based on the 20/20 principle endorsed by the World Summit for Social Development.

Ecuador

13. The Ecuador MTR took place three months after a new Government was installed. One of the major preoccupations of the meeting was that basic indicators in health were not improving and were worsening in nutrition. Immunization rates had stagnated at approximately 75 per cent. There had been significant progress in the poor Andean communities covered by the Programa de la Región Andina (PROANDES) (Programme for the Andean Region), linked to the expansion of bilingual education, which had given many more rural children access to learning. UNICEF was also a major partner in a large education project funded by the World Bank that provided new schools to underserved communities.

14. Much of the current programme had focused on capacity-building at different levels of society and with a range of government and non-government counterparts. There was praise for the programme's social mobilization efforts, especially the recent yo cuento contigo ("I am counting on you") programme, which gave expression to children's views, concerns and hopes during the run-up to the

1996 general election and which convinced all the major presidential candidates, including the new President, to declare their commitment to policies that protect children's rights, promote new legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and invest more in the social sectors.

15. Participants were concerned, however, by the dispersion of efforts and resources among 10 programmes and 211 activities, especially as supplementary funding was not received at the rate originally anticipated. The programmes most affected by the funding shortfall were for nutrition, young child development, CEDC and water and sanitation projects.

16. In conclusion, UNICEF was asked to support the Government in its efforts to improve health and nutrition, as well as to provide the technical expertise and funding necessary to improve rapidly the situation of children and to help the Government reach and maintain the goals adopted in the national plan of action and the 1994 Nariño Accord. UNICEF was asked to build on its successes and further develop the area of children's rights; to consolidate programme areas, for example by expanding the successful education programme into the PROANDES and Amazon programme areas; and to reduce the number of activities to create a focused, efficient and effective programme.

Haiti

17. In Haiti, the MTR provided an excellent opportunity for a formal exchange of ideas with the new Government, which had been installed less than three months previously. The current programme was reviewed, and it was agreed that UNICEF support had been crucial at very difficult times over the previous three years. There was much debate over the role of NGOs. Government participants questioned the high proportion of assistance still being channelled through NGOs, but it was recognized that until government departments improved the capacity and quality of service delivery, NGOs would continue to play a key role in ensuring access to services for most children and women. It was proposed that a partnership between the Government and NGOs be formed. In the meantime, UNICEF should work with all partners.

18. Much of the work over the past three years had been a response to the emergency, with particular emphasis on health, nutrition, water and sanitation. As the country programme becomes more regular, the MTR requested that UNICEF now give greater priority to education, expand water and sanitation interventions and strengthen the women-centred integrated projects, especially in the poorer areas of north-west Haiti.

19. It was decided to postpone the preparation of a new programme and extend the current programme so as to harmonize the country programming cycle with those of other United Nations agencies and to develop further the partnership with the new Government. This will allow UNICEF to make the transition to a regular programme while achieving the objectives of the current three-year programme approved by the Executive Board in 1995. A two-year bridging programme will be presented to the Executive Board at its third regular session in September 1997.

EVALUATIONS

Central American water and sanitation programme

20. The evaluation of the UNICEF water and sanitation programme in Central America, undertaken by the Swedish International Development Agency, was undertaken in 1995 and the report was issued in 1996. This was the first external evaluation of the programme.

21. The evaluators found that the UNICEF model of "catalytic inputs" brought immediate results. This model is based on the promotion and dissemination of appropriate, low-cost technology and the mobilization of locally available resources. However, the programme had remained predominantly biased towards water provision with too little emphasis on hygiene and health.

22. Technologies need to be standardized to permit production within the subregion and reduce the problem of spare parts and delivery delays. At the same time, a new cadre of people should be involved to create alliances with others for the sustainability of programme successes.

23. The current approach to cost-recovery demands no contribution towards investment from rural communities and partial contribution in peri-urban areas. The evaluators recommend that willingness to pay be used as an indicator of demand and that it be applied to the programme.

24. The evaluators recommend continued support to the programme, which should include all seven countries and a subregional component. They recommend an improved balance between water and sanitation and more focus on capacity-building and empowerment through participatory planning and implementation. They call for the establishment of a strict management and monitoring system that reflects how the different parts of the programme are linked.

25. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation have been shared with concerned government counterparts and were taken into consideration in preparing the new Central American subregional water and sanitation programme approved by the Executive Board in September 1996 (E/ICEF/1996/P/L.70).

Programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru

26. The evaluation of the CEDC programmes in Brazil, Guatemala and Peru was undertaken by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which provided most of the $17 million received for the programmes. In Guatemala and Peru, UNICEF was a major partner with the Government, and in Brazil, local governments and NGOs played a central role in programme execution.

27. Three different programme methodologies were evaluated. Community-oriented programmes encourage parents to institute preventive measures with educational, recreational and cultural activities. Street-based programmes provide psychological as well as medical and educational services, through

street educators and social workers, to help reintegrate children into families and schools. Lastly, open institutions attract street children and provide an adequate environment for the child's personal and social development.

28. The evaluators found that programme methodologies were not sufficiently differentiated by gender to be able to highlight girls' problems. It was difficult to reach child drug addicts and others with social problems on a consistent basis.

29. They stressed that any form of support to the labour of working children under 14 years of age should be eliminated in favour of economic incentives which would free them from work and send them to school.

30. They recommended that all CEDC activities should be compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that IDB should ensure that its interventions in this area are consistent with the UNICEF programmes in a given country. CEDC programmes should be integrated with health, education and urban programmes in marginal areas.

31. The evaluators concluded that the IDB-sponsored programmes did not address the underlying causes that lead to the current and future existence of street children and working children.

32. They stressed that the partnership with UNICEF was highly positive and that UNICEF possessed the necessary technical expertise. They proposed that the best partnership would have UNICEF serve in the capacity of technical adviser, while the resources would be allocated to executing entities.

Haiti country programme

33. The evaluation of the Haiti country programme covered the period from 1992 to mid-1996. The team consisted of two external evaluators and one staff member from the UNICEF Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning. The evaluation focused on strategic programme choices, management response and programme outcome, and also identified sustainable elements of programming during emergency and transition phases.

34. The team found that UNICEF, with a range of partners, did manage successfully to provide essential basic services to the population during the crisis period. This included far-reaching immunization and vitamin A distribution, as well as the provision of crucial water supplies, primarily in urban areas. Since the crisis, a national breast-feeding promotion campaign has made progress. UNICEF activities also have included strategic advocacy for child rights as well as relatively small-scale, but increasingly strategic, activities in education and with street children.

35. During the crisis, including the period when the sanctions imposed by the United Nations were in effect, UNICEF cooperation played a leading role in monitoring the situation of children so that their survival, development and protection rights would be respected. These actions demonstrated that the cooperation programme was able to collect, analyse and use information on the

situation of children in a highly sensitive country situation in a manner which helped to establish effective partnerships with NGOs and other partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance despite the various constraints inherent in the country situation.

36. The evaluators also underlined the importance of balanced partnership strategies, involving both traditional government partners and civil society organizations, as part of emergency preparation in situations of potential crisis. Limited civil society partnerships in the first year of the crisis left UNICEF isolated, and severely hampered in terms of implementation. UNICEF subsequently developed excellent relationships with the non-governmental sector and other elements of civil society. UNICEF also initiated an approach for strengthening community-based organizations for local-level preparedness and medium-term development.

37. The Haiti experience underlines the tremendous challenge posed by partnerships for UNICEF as a capacity-building organization. UNICEF partnerships must be based on a careful match between UNICEF objectives, resources and capacities and the capacities of partners. These new initiatives require careful, ideally participatory, monitoring of progress.

38. UNICEF was able to develop a flexible and strategic plan for different scenarios, allowing options for response to crisis as well as transition to democracy. Nevertheless, the evaluators underlined the tendency of UNICEF to fall back into planning for the status quo in spite of a tense local context. It was indicated that more support could have been given from headquarters and the regional office in terms of placing or seconding experienced staff to support the country office at critical periods.

Control of iodine deficiency disorders in Bolivia

39. In September, a group of experts from UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders and the Programme against Micronutrient Malnutrition evaluated Bolivia's progress in controlling IDD. The evaluation concluded that Bolivia has eliminated IDD nationwide as a public health problem and recommended that support continue for monitoring the quality and consistency of salt iodization.

CONCLUSIONS

40. Several conclusions can be drawn from the four reviews and four evaluations. Partnership is an essential element of success within a broad alliance of Governments, NGOs, United Nations agencies and donors working for children. More frequent review and analysis of country situations would ensure more rapid intervention when problems are identified. The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all situations, but the tools to use it as a monitoring and programme framework are still not adequately developed. These and other conclusions have been presented for analysis and comment to the standing committees of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Management Team (RMT). The results and implications will be reviewed by the full RMT in April 1997.

41. Despite the wide range of situations and experiences reviewed in the present document, it is clear that UNICEF remains a critical partner, responding to community and country demands and needs. It confirms the importance of the country approach to programming while highlighting the need for more systematic exchange of experiences between countries and regions.

42. It has been decided regionally that in-depth management reviews will be undertaken in conjunction with each MTR and at the time of reviewing proposed plans of operation before submitting country programme recommendations to the Executive Board.